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SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID

REPORT OF THE SYMPOSIUM ON POLITICAL TOLERANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA: ROLE OF OPINION-MAKERS AND THE MEDIA, HELD AT CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, FROM 30 JULY TO 1 AUGUST 1993

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INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 3 of its resolution 47/116 B of 18 December 1992, authorized the Special Committee against Apartheid, in accordance with its mandate, to "mobilize international support for the elimination of apartheid through the early establishment in South Africa of a society based on an agreed democratic and non-racial constitution", and to "facilitate a peaceful and stable transition in South Africa by promoting international assistance to help South Africans overcome the negative social and economic consequences of the policies of apartheid". Accordingly, the Special Committee included in its programme of work for 1993 projects which are oriented towards the objectives set forth in the resolution.

2. From 1 to 11 March 1993, a delegation of the Special Committee, led by its Chairman, visited South Africa in order to obtain a firsthand understanding of several complex and interlinked factors relating to the political settlement process, as well as an understanding of how that process could be further encouraged and of the role that the international community could play in that respect. Among the factors influencing the situation were the widespread political violence, the continued economic downturn and the festering socio-economic developments in South Africa. The mission established contact and held broad-based consultations with numerous parties involved in the current political process towards peaceful change and the full elimination of apartheid. 1/

3. On the basis of its programme of work and consultations conducted during the fact-finding mission, the Special Committee decided to co-sponsor together with the Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA) and the Institute for Multiparty Democracy (MPD), the Symposium on Political Tolerance in South Africa: Role of Opinion-Makers and the Media. The Symposium was held at Somerset West, Cape Town, South Africa, from 30 July to 1 August 1993.

4. In the light of widespread agreement that a broad-based understanding of the democratic process was essential in order to foster the climate of political tolerance needed for free and fair elections in the months ahead, the main objective of the Symposium was to provide an opportunity for a broad spectrum of South African opinion-makers, experts and media personalities to discuss and examine the role they could play in reaching out to the majority of South Africans with a message of basic democratic values that could easily be understood and adopted as part of their daily lives, in support of the multiparty negotiating process and the eventual transition of South Africa to a new, non-racial and democratic society. Opinion-makers and the media in South Africa, in that context, assume a special responsibility.

I. AGENDA

5. The agenda of the Symposium was as follows:

(a) The educational potential of the print and electronic media; the mechanism for consultation on agreed criteria for media education on fundamental values in the democratic process;

(b) Media reporting on political events, actions and pronouncements, and its impact on the viability of a pluralistic society; effectiveness of, and proposals for voluntary measures of encouragement and restraint.

II. OFFICERS AND PARTICIPANTS

6. The Symposium was chaired by Mr. Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria), Chairman of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid. It was co-chaired by the Executive Director of IDASA, Mr. Alex L. Boraine, and the Executive Chairman of MPD, Mr. Oscar D. Dhlomo. Mr. N. A. Abrous, Assistant Director of the Centre Against Apartheid, was Secretary of the Symposium.

7. At the invitation of IDASA and MPD, more than 80 prominent South African opinion-makers, media experts, academics, political scientists, and trade unionists attended the Symposium in their individual capacities (for the list of participants, see annex II).

8. Mr. Dhlomo and Mr. Boraine, the two Co-Chairmen of the Symposium, also acted as moderators of the two panel discussions which were addressed by 16 panellists from among the participants.

9. The Special Committee against Apartheid was represented by its Chairman, Mr. Ibrahim A. Gambari, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations, and Mr. Abdullahi A. Omaki, Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations. Mr. Tebogo Mafole of the African National Congress of South Africa and Mr. Dabi Khumalo of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania attended the Symposium as observers. The United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa was represented by the Chief-of-Mission, Ms. Angela E. V. King, and Ms. Betty-Ann Russell. Ms. Colleen Lowe Morna represented the Commonwealth Observer Group in South Africa. The proceedings were also open to members of South African media who had expressed an interest in being present.

III. DOCUMENTATION

10. Six South African experts, invited to participate as panellists, presented background papers. Additional background material was provided by other participants, the co-sponsors and the Centre Against Apartheid (for the list of documents, see annex III).

IV. PROCEEDINGS

11. The work of the Symposium was conducted in opening and closing meetings as well as in panel discussions.

A. Opening meeting

12. The Symposium was opened on 30 July 1993 by Mr. Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria), Chairman of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid. Mr. Alex L. Boraine addressed the opening session on behalf of IDASA. Mr. Oscar Dhlomo made a statement on behalf of MPD. Ms. Angela King, Chief-of-Mission of UNOMSA, also made a statement (see annex I).

13. Additional statements were made by Mr. Retief Olivier, Regional Manager of the Western Cape Peace Committee on behalf of the Chairman of the Committee, and by Ms. Sbongile Nene of the National Women's Coalition (see annex I).

14. In the afternoon meeting, presentations of background papers (see annex III) were made by Mr. Wilhelm Johann de Klerk, Rand Afrikaans University; Mr. Oscar Dhlomo, Executive Chairman of MPD; Mr. Z. B. Molefe, Deputy Editor of the City Press; Mr. Lawrence Schlemmer, Vice President of the Human Sciences Research Council; Ms. Karen Stander, General Secretary of the South African Union of Journalist (SAUJ); and Mr. Gerhard Erasmus of the University of Natal.

B. Panel discussions

15. The proceedings of the Symposium were conducted in two panels. Panel I considered the educational potential of the print and electronic media; and the mechanisms for consultation on agreed criteria for media education on fundamental values in the democratic process. Panel II examined media reporting on political events, actions and pronouncements and its impact on the viability of a pluralistic society; as well as on the effectiveness of, and proposals for, voluntary measures of encouragement and restraint.

16. It was decided that after brief introductory remarks by the panellists, participants would divide into three discussion groups representing the print media, radio and television. A representative of each group would report back to the panel on points and issues covered in the discussions. It was further decided that summaries of both panel proceedings would be presented by the two Co-Chairmen at the closing meeting of the Symposium.

17. The first panel was moderated by the Executive Chairman of MPD, Mr. Oscar Dhlomo. Panellists included Mr. Guy Berger, Editor, South; Mr. Freek Robinson, Editor, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Television; Mr. Wilhelm Johann de Klerk, Rand Afrikaans University; Mr. Sipho Ngobese, Editor, Ilanga; Mr. Billy Modise, Executive Director, Matla Trust; Ms. Judy Sandison, Editor, Radio News Natal; Ms. Nomavenda Mathiane, Broadcaster, Capital Radio; and Ms. Karen Stander, General Secretary, SAUJ. After group discussions, Mr. David L. Smith, Head of Programmes of Capital Radio reported on behalf of the radio group; Mr. Narandran Kollapen, National Projects Director of Lawyers for Human Rights, spoke on behalf of the television group;

and Mr. Alan Fine, Assistant Editor of Business Day, briefed the panel on discussions by the press group.

18. The second panel was moderated by the Executive Director of IDASA, Mr. Alex L. Boraine. Panellists in this forum were Mr. Lester Venter, Chief Political Correspondent, SABC; Mr. Allister Sparks, Director, Institute for the Advancement of Journalism; Mr. San Reddy, Producer, Radio Bophuthatswana; Mr. R. W. Johnson, MPD; Ms. Yvonne Grimbeek, President, SAUJ; Mr. S. Khala, General Secretary, Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA); Mr. Raymond Louw, former editor, Rand Daily Mail; and Mr. Antonie Gildenhuys, Chairman, National Peace Secretariat. After group discussions Mr. Khaba Mkhize, Assistant Editor, The Natal Witness, reported back for the press, Ms. Valerie Rose-Christie, Black Sash/Network of Independent Monitors (NIM), for the radio group, and Mr. Narandran Kollapen, once again for the television group. Some of the participants took the floor to comment on the reports given.

C. Closing meeting

19. At the closing meeting, which was held on 1 August 1993, the Chairman of the Special Committee made a statement (see annex I). The two Co-Chairmen of the Symposium then summarized the findings of the panel discussions.

20. Participants in panel I recognized the crucial importance of political tolerance in fostering a culture of democracy. They agreed that tangible steps were needed to be taken to promote political tolerance. However, there was no consensus on how the promotion of tolerance could be tackled through the media. This was perhaps understandable given the fact that the media function in different environments and cater to different social categories of readers. Nevertheless, some smaller newspapers were already performing an educative role in cooperation with certain non-governmental organizations. One example was South which runs the MPD and Matla Trust educational programmes. City Press and Ilanga have also carried some educational material on democracy.

21. Participants expressed the view that the electronic media (radio and television) seemed to fully accept their role as educators for democracy. In some regions radio was already performing this role; for example Radio Zulu. There was a feeling that the media could also play an educative role in translating and "decoding" some constitutional and political concepts, which were taken for granted by journalists, but were more difficult to comprehend for the majority of the people they wanted to reach. It was important to recognize that political leaders needed to be encouraged to address their audiences in a language they could understand.

22. Given the rise in the level of violence, the media should support and promote peace structures. It was revealed that this violence has spilled over into most sectors of South African society to the extent of including journalists themselves. Instances were recounted where journalists had been harassed and even murdered.

23. The role of SABC in promoting voter education was highlighted by the participants. There was a feeling that it would be advisable for SABC not to undertake that task singlehandedly, but rather to cooperate fully with

independent and non-partisan non-governmental organizations or to leave the task wholly to the NGOs. On issues such as the period of transition and the role of the media in such circumstances, the United Nations was called upon to share its valuable resources with the South African media.

24. On the whole, participants felt that the Symposium achieved its objectives. It focused on the need to promote tolerance, it discussed possible strategies for achieving that through the media and it received an assurance that, through the United Nations, more information on the problems of transition and the role of the media would be made available.

25. Participants in panel II made recommendations on the reporting of political events, on the effectiveness of media reporting, and on the issue of voter education. Participants recalled that South Africa was not the first and would not be the last country going through a transition from authoritarianism to democracy. South Africa, therefore, could and should learn from others. Participants appealed to the Chairman of the Special Committee to assist in supplying relevant information as a matter of urgency.

26. Participants resolved that the media should not only avoid simplistic reporting, thereby implying a "quick fix", but also avoid sensationalism and hype. Circulation figures should not be the sole criterion for deciding upon presentation of the news. Balanced, in-depth, contextual reporting should be the objective of both the print and electronic media. "Grey, bland, falsely optimistic journalism" should be avoided as much as the formula "don't worry - be happy".

27. Inevitably, the media reflects society, but should attempt to reflect "all the news". Bad news comes knocking at the door, but often good news should be sought for. Journalists should spend less time in their offices, on the telephone and the fax machine, and more time in the streets, in the townships and amongst the people. There was a general consensus among participants that the media should seek to create a culture of tolerance and peace, not an artificial peace, but a creation of a mood through comment, editorials, leader page articles as well as programmes on radio and television.

28. It was generally accepted by the participants that the media had remarkable opportunities to reach millions of readers, listeners and viewers which gave them a special responsibility over and above that of ordinary citizens. In that context, participants underlined that the media must be much more aware of developments in South Africa as a whole than they have been in the past. Attention should be given to the language and the idiom of reporting since the majority of South Africans were not sophisticated, urban dwellers, speaking English or Afrikaans. Radio had a special responsibility in that regard and was potentially extremely powerful. For many South Africans it was the only link to the larger world, beyond their farming communities, rural villages and sprawling squatter camps.

29. Participants also agreed that the media should avoid fulsome praise of all the major players at this difficult time of transition. It should also avoid bias and partiality. Many participants felt that the media ought to be a lot tougher on political leaders, provided that it was consistent. The media should give credit where it was deserved and censure where it was appropriate. The

crucial role of the police called for credit and censure to be apportioned as merited.

30. While the media should not be asked to accept full responsibility for voter education, it could, by its very nature, be critically important in reaching large numbers of people. It was noted by the participants that while much had already been done, much more would be demanded of the media in this regard. In particular, the SABC, through its large viewership and in particular listenership, had a special responsibility. The impression so far was that there was a great deal of confusion as to who must accept responsibility for programmes. It was stressed that because of the historical credibility gap, the SABC should involve as many organizations as possible who have expertise and resources in this field. It was reported that a special subcommittee had been set up by the new SABC board, which would give urgent attention to this matter and, hopefully, communicate some specific action plan to the general public.

31. In conclusion, participants stressed that while many of them were working in the world of journalism, print and electronic media, they were aware of their responsibilities, but that the considerable task ahead would require more focus. Continued news of killings almost every day were a sombre reminder of the need for all South Africans to commit themselves to working more urgently towards a less violent, more peaceful and tolerant society.

32. The participants were invited to make suggestions, comment and discuss issues related to the implementation of the recommendations made in the course of the deliberations of the Symposium. Eleven participants addressed the plenary.

33. The Symposium was adjourned after the Chairman summed up the views, findings and recommendations made.

34. Immediately following the closing of the Symposium, a press conference was held.

Notes

1/ See A/48/202-S/25895.

Annex I

STATEMENTS

A. Opening statement by Mr. Ibrahim A. Gambari, Chairman of the Symposium and Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid

1. It is a great honour and privilege for me to welcome you all to this important Symposium on Political Tolerance in South Africa: the Role of Opinion-Makers and the Media. The Symposium is being jointly sponsored by the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid in conjunction with two reputable organizations inside South Africa - the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (MPD) and the Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA). The outstanding work and commitment of these two organizations to the cause of a new, non-racial and democratic South Africa are very well known to all. May I thank them on your behalf for the excellent preparations made for the Symposium. Let me also state at the outset that this is the first time ever that the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid, either alone or in conjunction with other organizations, has held such a function on the soil of South Africa. This, indeed, is an acknowledgement of the positive changes that have occurred in this country within the last three years.

2. That we are meeting in this beautiful city of Cape Town, so rich in history and culture, so hospitable and so determined in its commitment to a non-racial democracy in South Africa, is a good omen for our future work. I am very encouraged that so many prominent South African opinion-makers and media experts, academics and others have found it possible to join us in spite of their heavy schedules. I also wish to acknowledge the presence in our midst of the distinguished representatives of the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA), the Organization of African Unity, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the European Community, to whom I wish to pay tribute for their steadfast commitment and their work towards peace and reconciliation in South Africa.

3. Much has happened in South Africa over the past three years. In spite of threats of all sorts and, indeed, despite the senseless and continuing political violence, the negotiating process has moved forward, largely because of the wisdom, resilience and determination of the majority of political leaders, both Black and White, who have not allowed repeated provocations to derail the process. The Special Committee also believes that the unwavering support of the international community for the negotiated settlement of the conflict and the advent of a new, non-racial and democratic South Africa has played an important role in this complex crisis.

4. It will be recalled in this connection that in December 1989, Member States of the United Nations, adopted by consensus, for the first time ever in the history of the Organization, a landmark Declaration on South Africa that drew up a broad framework for a just, peaceful and lasting settlement of the conflict. By the same token, they committed themselves, individually and collectively, to providing international safeguards that would assist in bringing the negotiating process to a successful end.

5. The Special Committee for its part has a long tradition of standing side-by-side with the oppressed South African people in their long and painful journey to freedom, justice and equality of opportunity for all. Just as the international community stood firm for decades on the side of the vast majority of South Africans in opposition to apartheid, it has remained resolutely on the side of the South African people in facilitating a smooth transition to a new, non-racial constitutional order in South Africa.

6. In 1992 the African States requested the United Nations Security Council to examine the issue of violence in South Africa and to take all appropriate action to put an end to it, as well as to create conditions for negotiations leading towards a peaceful transition towards a democratic non-racial and united South Africa. Subsequently the Security Council adopted resolution 772 (1992), which authorized the Secretary-General to deploy the United Nations Observer Mission to South Africa (UNOMSA). Observer missions from the Commonwealth, the European Community and the Organization of African Unity are also in place to promote the peaceful settlement of the conflict in South Africa.

7. On my way to this country, I learned with great sadness of the massacre at the Saint James Church last Sunday. The Special Committee deplores this senseless act of violence and wishes to express its deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of the victims of that vicious attack, as well as to the congregation as a whole. The Special Committee also wishes to appeal once again to all South Africans to think of their country's national interests and international image and to give peace a chance in order to assist in the establishment of a climate for reconciliation and political tolerance in their country.

8. Yesterday many Capetonians wore white ribbons to express their concern over the Saint James Church massacre and their general concern about the ongoing violence in South Africa, as well as to reaffirm their resolve to achieve a peaceful settlement in the country. It was also meant as a strong protest against criminal actions intended to derail the negotiating process. It is reassuring that the rallying for peace and reconciliation has become a permanent feature in the lives of many South Africans today, even as horrible incidents of violence in the country continue to mar the irreversible momentum towards a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

9. That the Committee decided to hold a Symposium on Political Tolerance in South Africa focused on opinion-makers and the media is no coincidence. It is, indeed, a measure of the Committee's determination to promote the core values that underpin the whole structure in a multi-party democracy; very specifically, the central concept and practice of political tolerance with all that they entail in terms of mutual respect, respect for the political views and opinions of others, the right to agree and to disagree, the duty to allow political opponents the right to speak, associate and organize freely. It involves, of necessity, the obligation to partake in the social compact in full harmony with others and to work towards the common good.

10. It is perhaps appropriate to mention here, the words of wisdom contained in the address by Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO, at the International Meeting of Experts on the Problems of Tolerance held at Istanbul, 17 April 1993: "The conscious effort that has to be made to accept and

appreciate otherness is also a road that has to be trod in order to arrive at a democratic culture ... Democracy, which lends itself to the expression of diversity, is also a way of social functioning in which every citizen must follow absolutely the rule of listening and understanding."

11. Political tolerance, as it has evolved from constitutional theory and practice, since the eighteenth century, is a core value that not only keeps the social structure together but also enables it to function smoothly. It underlies the checks and balance system that makes it possible for individuals in society to act freely as responsible citizens, in full awareness of their rights and obligations. Political tolerance, in a word, is the catalyst that makes it possible for enlightened self-interest to subsume harmoniously within the larger collective interest of which it is as much a cause as a consequence.

12. Tolerance in its manifold manifestations is very much a part of the African tradition, the tradition of African humanism which can explain to a large extent how we have come this far in the negotiating process, how the broad masses have overcome the strictures and confines of past suffering to throw their weight behind democratic and constitutional change. Without African forbearance and forgiveness - which are the key components of tolerance - many of the successes scored by the South African people on the long road to freedom, justice and equality of opportunities for all, would not have been possible.

13. The concepts and practices of political tolerance, human rights and democracy are closely intertwined as are the twin concepts of democracy and development. These interrelationships have been duly acknowledged by the United Nations and integrated in its programmes aimed at bringing about peace and reconciliation, fostering the ongoing negotiating process and identifying ways in which members of the international community could assist in addressing the huge socio-economic inequalities resulting from decades of apartheid.

14. You will recall that last year, in Windhoek, the Special Committee organized a well attended conference focusing international attention on the huge socio-economic disparities of the country as well as on ways and means to address them during the transition period, particularly in the critical areas of housing, education, employment and health. I am heartened to note that the exchange of views that took place in Windhoek among the South African participants and their international counterparts have become central to international aid agencies, including the World Bank.

15. The twin concerns of the Special Committee for political tolerance and the advent of a non-racial constitutional democracy on the one hand, and sustainable development on the other, are predicated on the strong conviction that the best democratic institutions are unlikely to last unless they rest on strong and sound socio-economic foundations and on tangible improvements in living conditions of the poorer segments of society.

16. We know that this conviction is widely shared in South Africa and abroad. Now that South Africa is set on an irreversible course towards a new, non-racial and democratic order with universal suffrage elections set for 27 April 1994 and a Transitional Executive Council to be established soon, it is more important than ever that we bring everything to bear to contain and defuse political violence, to enhance a climate conducive to free and fair elections through

dedicated media involvement aimed at making the broad masses, in the cities, in the townships and rural areas of South Africa, more aware of their rights and obligations in a non-racial democracy. Who else is better equipped to initiate and carry out these campaigns than the distinguished South African opinion-makers and editors, publishers, academics, religious leaders and others that have assembled here today. Your access to the parties involved in the Multi-party Negotiating Forum (MPNF), your wise counsel and personal commitment to a new democratic and non-racial South Africa, can make a critical contribution in the months ahead.

17. Given your capability to reach out into the length and breadth of the country, opinion-makers and the media of South Africa constitute probably the most effective channel available during this transitional period to monitor and report on the peace process, to persuade public opinion of the imperative of national reconciliation and to promote public understanding of crucial issues which affect the lives of every South African. For two days, you will exchange views on what to do and how to do it. Some of you already know each other. I hope that this will be an opportunity for all of us to get to know one another even better. But let us remember that the success of our common endeavours at this gathering will depend not only on the understanding we may reach here, but above all, on the follow-up action by opinion-makers and the media represented here, and by others who will decide to join. It will depend also on what private foundations and non-governmental organizations in South Africa and abroad are prepared to do to spread the good word and promote tolerance, peace and reconciliation.

18. We, in the Special Committee, have no doubt that all men and women of good will in South Africa will respond to the call. We know that, somehow, South Africans will find within themselves, the strength and resolve to rise above their differences and forge a common future. As we were with them on the long and arduous journey to freedom and justice for all, so shall we remain with them at this critical time of transition until success is achieved.

19. Let us all remember that a new, non-racial South Africa could only be sustained if it has a solid foundation of respect for fundamental human rights that encompasses a willingness to coexist with differences, a culture of respect for the rule of law, drawn up for the protection of all its citizens and applied equally to all of its citizens, as well as the provision of equal opportunities for the economic and social well-being of all. To paraphrase the words of the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, South Africans need to express unanimous resolve in the face of the contemporary crises and this must not be just a rejection of intolerance but a powerful affirmation of the value of tolerance itself and of the values with which tolerance is closely linked: democracy, human rights and solidarity.

20. Because of its rich endowment of resources and its seasoned leadership, both Black and White, and because of its suffering too, South Africa has much to contribute to Africa and to the world. We look forward to the time when South Africa, reconciled with itself, can forge ahead with confidence as a full partner in the international community.

B. Summary of the statement by Mr. Alex L. Boraine, Co-Chairman of the Symposium and Executive Director of IDASA

21. It was historic that the Symposium was taking place in South Africa. It was also historic that both IDASA and MPD were publicly invited to assist in organizing the Symposium. There was a lack of a democratic culture, of a tradition and experience in tolerance as well as an illegitimate parliament in South Africa. The struggle for power and turf only fostered a vicious cycle of violence. The fruits of racial intolerance greatly threatened the ongoing negotiations and the scheduled free and fair elections. It seemed that political brinkmanship and the scoring of points were more important than resolving the conflict in the country.

22. South Africa has come a long way and there were causes for optimism. However, a dangerous crossroad has been reached in the transition of the country, which made it clear that unless violence was stopped, there would be no building of tolerance, no democracy and no future for the country. Although the media had not always been in the forefront of the struggle against apartheid and many often gave unqualified support to the policies and practices of apartheid without questioning, its role would be profoundly important in exposing the power hungry.

23. In a new South Africa, as under any dispensation, fairness and independence of the media could not be taken for granted. It must be sought and fought for in order to expose without fermentation and to educate with skill and dedication. This special role must be accepted by the media because of the opportunities available to them that were denied to others. It would be foolish to ignore the current resurgence of racism and the widening of the gap between Blacks and Whites in the country. A survey conducted by IDASA showed a serious deterioration of race relations in South Africa. White fears and suspicion, as well as black revulsion, needed to be addressed if an outbreak of race war was going to be prevented. Racism could be overcome only if the economic, social and political issues were properly addressed.

24. In this context, political tolerance would provide the cement which was needed to keep the South African house together before it would fall apart. The assistance by the international community and the United Nations such as those rendered by UNOMSA and other observer missions to the peace efforts in South Africa were highly appreciated. More support would be required on the eve of the upcoming elections.

C. Summary of the statement by Mr. Oscar Dhlomo, Co-Chairman of the Symposium and Executive Chairman of MPD

25. South Africa was going through a transition. While the country was preparing for its socio-political transition, the important topic of promoting tolerance in South Africa was a timely step in its drive for a non-racial, non-sexist, united and democratic, post-apartheid State through the agreed mode of negotiations involving all political players in South Africa. There was growing evidence that the process of transformation was difficult and painful. In the wake of attempts to delay the dawn of democracy, which often were in the

form of threats with weapons, there needed to be emphasis on principles which would guide the transitional process. One of those principles was the willingness and ability to compromise. Another was political tolerance.

26. The building of a new South Africa would have no chance if it was done on the basis of continued hatred, violence, suspicion and intolerance. Tolerance would imply mutual trust which should impact on the difficult task of arriving at a democratic society. Parties involved in that process have to put the interest of the country above their own.

27. Since political tolerance was a cornerstone in that process, the Symposium provided an excellent opportunity to share ideas for the creation of a culture of tolerance on the one hand, and to explore, on the other hand, the contribution the media could make towards that end. The Symposium was also an example that the international community was ready to assist South Africans in their endeavour to build a new country. In that regard, the initiatives put forward by the Special Committee and the peace observer missions in South Africa, in particular by UNOMSA, were appreciated.

D. Summary of the statement by Ms. Angela King, Chief-of-Mission, UNOMSA

28. The United Nations has been involved with the affairs of South Africa for more than four decades. It spearheaded the campaign against the apartheid system through several initiatives aimed at alleviating the sufferings of the victims of apartheid. Among them was the decision to establish in November 1962, the Special Committee against Apartheid, which was a co-sponsor of this important event. The most recent initiative of the United Nations was the decision of the Secretary-General to deploy as a matter of urgency, United Nations Observers in South Africa following the adoption of resolution 772 (1992) by the Security Council, to help bring an effective end to public violence and intimidation, to assist in creating a conducive climate for negotiations leading towards a peaceful transition to a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and united South Africa and to support the peace structures; the Goldstone Commission, the National Peace Committee (NPC), the National Peace Secretariat (NPS), and the 100 local peace committees throughout the country.

29. In this context, the decision of the organizers was welcome to focus attention on the urgent need for a sustained dialogue on basic democratic concepts and principles that should be understood and accepted by any society that embarked on the path of democracy. This was particularly so in South Africa, where decades of apartheid, with its legacy of distrust, has made the search for a democratic solution to complex problems extremely difficult.

30. The situation was compounded by the almost total absence in South Africa, of a culture of political tolerance and compromise. It was difficult if not impossible to talk of democracy where there was intolerance. A point had been reached in South Africa where communities were divided into "no-go areas" for supporters of rival political organizations; where there was a deep lack of trust and confidence in the security forces; and where the ready availability of weapons of all kinds and particularly of licensed and unlicensed firearms contributed to highly volatile situations.

31. For over 10 months, the team of 50 United Nations observers had witnessed over 8,500 events. Of these some were dramatic, such as the assassination, memorial and funeral of Mr. Chris Hani; activities and statements of militant right-wingers, including statements of some who vowed to wage war if certain political organizations were to come to power; and the invasion of the World Trade Centre by supporters of right-wing groups who disrupted the work of the negotiators who were laying the foundation of a new and democratic South Africa. A change in the nature of violence was observed in the desecration of a church and the shocking loss of lives in the townships of Natal, Witwatersrand and Cape Town. Equal concern was aired at the assassinations of soft targets - women, children whether white or Black, elderly White farmers and their families - claimed by left-wing elements. Devastated and traumatised children were left without parents, homes or solace in Natal and the East Rand.

32. Probably the most important and intractable sources of violence were to be found in the lack of tolerance and in the appalling socio-economic conditions under which the majority of Black people lived. Unless those and other equally burning issues were openly and objectively discussed and peacefully resolved with a spirit of tolerance and understanding, it would be difficult to see free and fair elections be held and a free political society exist in a new South Africa. It was widely accepted that one of the main prerequisites for a free, political society was a free and balanced news media.

33. In South Africa, after years of repression, people were desperately hungry for information, the free exchange of ideas and opinions through newspapers, magazines, radio, television and other means of mass communication. Reporters, photographers and sound people who have risked their lives reporting on incidents in violent areas had to be saluted. Many of them had been injured and killed in the past few months.

34. Since with freedom would come responsibility, the media and media makers could not stand aside merely reporting "the facts". The news media sometimes reported events which might provoke and sell news but which assisted political leaders in conducting verbal onslaughts among themselves which served to inflame their followers further. Instead, the media needed to report on positive events and processes that were working on the ground. Many newspapers throughout the country were reporting on positive events under the National Peace Accord and outside, such as the community of Mpumalanga in Natal and the Hostel Peace Pact signed in Johannesburg by 32 hostels. The Star, The Argus and the Daily Dispatch, for example, now carried a regular column on the Accord.

35. This was of crucial importance particularly as elections were approaching. If people were to understand and be involved with issues that concern them and how their lives would be affected by decisions that were taken by politicians and various forums on their behalf, then there was a need for the media and opinion-makers to play a decisive role by, among other things, simplifying and explaining, particularly in the African languages, basic democratic concepts and principles related to such matters as voter education and identification, the right of assembly and free political expression, why there were different political organizations and ideologies, what was happening at the National Party Negotiations and above all, why it was necessary not to look at other people as political enemies, but as fellow human beings who might have different ideas and opinions.

36. While participants of the Symposium aimed to chart the way forward for institutions and mechanisms that promote the free exchange of ideas, opinions and information in a democratic South Africa, the Symposium and its outcome could not but be of major impact on the events which would unfold in South Africa particularly in the next nine months, the gestation period for the first democratic elections.

E. Summary of the statement by Mr. Retief Olivier, Regional Manager, Western Cape Peace Committee

37. "The media mediates conflict, whether it intends to or not. Its representatives define, shape and often exacerbate conflict by the stories they choose to cover, by those they omit, by the sources they use, by the 'facts' they include, by the way they use language, by their own biases", wrote Melissa Baumann, a/ media analyst and Cape Town journalist, in a recent issue of the Rhodes Journalism Review. She continued by saying that "journalists can be dangerous mediators, dangerous because they often do not recognise, or do not accept responsibility for, this power that they wield."

38. This was also the experience of those working in the Peace Accord structures. Our experience was that media coverage plays a major role in the peace processes we are involved in. Simplistic or "popular" interpretations by the media of certain conflicts often lead to misunderstanding between political groups and their tolerance of one another. The opposite was also true. We saw also in this region that sensitive, thorough, fair and factual coverage of conflicts by responsible journalists facilitated peace and negotiations in very positive ways.

39. Baumann also said, that "Journalists have nearly unparalleled access to parties in a conflict (an advantage not even peace workers sometimes have). They ask antagonists in a conflict questions the parties would not ask each other. They promote dialogue. They erase misperceptions and ignorance. They give the culprits of violence no place to hide. They can help manage conflict towards just resolution ... The media can also widen agendas and move parties away from their seemingly intractable political positions. But so often the media does just the opposite, locking parties into their political posturing and irreconcilable differences. By looking at interests, basic human needs and value systems you can move beyond positions. Mediators embrace these tenets. Journalists could well do the same."

40. To help bring healing to South Africa and build a true democracy, the process that leads to peace, tolerance and justice needed to be transparent. The Peace Accord recognized that only the media could play that crucial role. In chapter 1 of the Peace Accord the signatories stated that freedom of speech and the free flow of information was fundamental to the process of establishing a tolerant society and the acceptance of democratic values.

F. Summary of the statement by Ms. Sbongile Nene, National Women's Coalition

41. The initiative to hold this Symposium was appreciated because it would contribute to advancing the cause of South African women in the country and to ensure a far broader participation of women in the peace process and society than their current representation within the Coalition. While South African women, who have associated themselves all along with the democratic dispensation, continued to suffer from a variety of limitations, they started early peace initiatives such as "Women for Peaceful Change Now" and were able to contribute meaningfully to the negotiating process, even as many men continuously failed to recognize that women also have an important role to play in the transition process.

42. The National Women's Coalition was currently engaged in a campaign to identify the specific needs of women in South Africa as well as to find ways and means to feed into the drafting of the new constitution and the much needed voter education. The media, in this regard, was called upon to intensify the reporting on the role of women in the peace, negotiation and transition process.

G. Closing statement by Mr. Ibrahim A. Gambari, Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid

43. For two and a half days, intensive deliberations have taken place at this Symposium on Political Tolerance. We hope they have helped in contributing to the debate on the critical and pressing issues concerning the role of South African opinion-makers and the media in covering and facilitating the transition to a new, non-racial and democratic South Africa. At a time when South Africa is preparing in earnest for universal suffrage elections set for April next year, the critical issues of political tolerance and reconciliation, which lie at the very core of a constitutional democracy, assume greater significance than ever before.

44. The role that opinion-makers and the media can play in living up to their responsibilities and duties was rightly highlighted at the Symposium by various media experts, prominent journalists and publishers who have decided to join us in spite of their heavy schedules and commitments. That they have joined us is not one of the lesser achievements of the Symposium. In a fast changing world, in a South Africa at grips with complex difficulties, it was timely that the press, opinion-makers, men and women of conscience, who had proven their commitment to the well-being of their country and indeed to the well-being of all its inhabitants, should reflect on their role in the nine months preceding the elections.

45. There were areas of agreement as well as areas of disagreement. Some issues were left open for future debate. We are happy to have provided the participants with an environment and arrangements which have admittedly facilitated their work. Panel discussions were indeed open to all and we hope that the useful work done by the panels will, in the days ahead, lead to or reinforce a public debate on the issues raised and on the contribution that the South African opinion-makers and media as well as the international press can make to support the ongoing negotiating process, through responsible and

balanced reporting, without sacrificing principles and ethics of their profession, as well as their overall responsibilities to the society as a whole.

46. Be that as it may, the opinion-makers and the media whose heroic role in maintaining their independence and integrity in support of human rights is not forgotten, and indeed the South African people at large, may rest assured that the international community, within the fold of the United Nations, will stand by their side, just as it had stood with them during the long years of struggle for peace, justice, and equality of opportunities for all in South Africa.

47. The arrangements for this Symposium were deliberately made so as to demonstrate that this was indeed a Symposium by South Africans and for South Africans. The presence in your midst of the Special Committee against Apartheid is simply to serve as a catalyst for the deliberation of the Symposium. As you all know, the Special Committee against Apartheid has played a critical role, inter alia, in forging within the United Nations a common platform, known as the Declaration on South Africa adopted in December 1989 by consensus for the first time in the history of the United Nations, which provides to this day the framework and principles within which a just, long lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict in South Africa could be achieved.

48. This platform is also important because it provides the international safeguards to bring the negotiating process to a successful end. Through a variety of ways and means available to them, and since 1989 when the Declaration was adopted, Member States, individually and collectively have lived up to their commitments.

49. While the road ahead in South Africa is still fraught with danger, it is important that through responsible and balanced reporting, the South African, and especially the international press, should become part of the solution and not part of the problem.

50. May I simply recall at this stage, that as soon as an agreement is obtained on the Transitional Executive Council and on an Interim Government of National Unity, the enormous economic and social imbalances resulting from decades of apartheid, will have to be attended to most urgently.

51. We all know that the media and television networks in particular, can induce social and political changes as well as a propitious or adverse business climate. While radical changes are taking place world-wide, affecting the very structure of current international relations and the very social fabric of every nation, it is perhaps necessary for members of the media to take a second look at the traditional ways in which they have worked, a traditional way, may I hasten to say, which has unquestionably proven its worth through its integrity and independence in sustaining multiparty democracies solidly implanted throughout the world. Nevertheless, in a changing world, in which every facet of life in every nation has been affected, it is possible to conceive that the press can voluntarily take on a changing role commensurate with the new challenges the world is facing today.

52. The participants of the Symposium have touched upon these various ideas which, we hope, will contribute to the national and international debate on the subject. Taking advantage of the participation of the Special Committee against

Apartheid in this Symposium, the first ever co-sponsored on South African soil - and this is a sign of the times - participants have requested that the United Nations, which is so rich in experience with regard to, inter alia, societies in transition, election monitoring, as well as the role of the media in fostering political and economic pluralism, should provide South African non-governmental organizations with documents, protocols, legal instruments and other information material available to it. It is my pleasure, and indeed, my duty upon return to United Nations Headquarters, to see to it that the documents are forwarded to you.

53. It is also a sign of the times that South Africans, long confined within the limits of their territory, are seeking to learn more from the experiences of other countries and from the rich and vast experience accumulated by organs and agencies of the United Nations, now that a new non-racial and democratic South Africa is emerging on the international horizon. It is also an indication that perhaps the time is not too far away when South Africa will be welcomed again as a full-fledged partner in the international community.

54. I am confident that, once South Africa has overcome its present difficulties, it has much to offer to Africa and to the world. Not only in terms of its economic potential but also in terms of the rich experience it has itself accumulated and also because of the common suffering of its people and their ability to rise above their differences, which will show them as an example of how the most difficult social and human relations can be amended and improved to general satisfaction. While we witness with horror the resurgence of racial and other forms of discrimination in many parts of the world, a great lesson could be learnt from the South African experiment once it has overcome the last hurdles on its way to a non-racial constitutional order.

55. My colleagues, Mr. Alex Boraine, the Executive Director of the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa, and Mr. Oscar Dhlomo, the Executive Chairman of the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, to whose competence and foresight I would like to pay tribute, will deal more specifically with the proceedings of the two panels in which the work of the Symposium effectively took place. That is why I have deliberately refrained from getting into the substantial work accomplished by the panels and the very fruitful exchange of views that took place there.

56. By way of conclusion, I would like to point out that by coming to this beautiful and hospitable South African shore and discussing the critical issues of tolerance and reconciliation that are at the very core of the current debate in South Africa, the Special Committee wanted to reiterate that the concerns of the South African people were its own concerns and that just as it had stood with them for decades, it still stands with them today.

Notes

a/ Acknowledgement by the speaker to M. Baumann, Media & Mediation Fellowship FvZ. Slabbert, IDASA.

Annex II

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Mr. Alex L. Boraine
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Ms. Amanda Smith	Secretary

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

A. Background papers

1. Role of media reporting in fostering political tolerance and a democratic political culture, by Ms. Karen Stander

2. Societal interrelationships between political tolerance, multi-party democracy and development, by Prof. Lawrence Schlemmer

3. The constitutional system of checks and balances: effective protection against political and other forms of intolerance, by Prof. Gerhard Erasmus

4. The dynamics of political tolerance in South Africa, by Mr. Oscar Dhlomo

5. The educational potential of the print and electronic media, by Mr. Z. B. Molefe

6. The South African media as a training college for democratic values, by Prof. Wilhelm Johann de Klerk

B. United Nations publications

1. "A New South Africa in the Making - Role of the United Nations", booklet, United Nations, Centre Against Apartheid, New York, 1992

2. Chairman of Special Committee against Apartheid Outlines 1993 Programme of Work, Notes and Documents, Centre Against Apartheid, No. 1/93

3. Statement by Mr. Justice R. J. Goldstone on his visit to the United States of America (11-25 April 1993), Notes and Documents, Centre Against Apartheid, No. 4/93

C. Other documents

1. Democracy in Action, Journal of the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa, Vol. 7, No. 4, 15 July 1993

2. MPD News, No. 4, December 1992

3. MPD News, No. 1, March 1993

4. MPD News, No. 2, June 1993